

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

LAKSHMI ARUNACHALAM,  
Plaintiff,

v.

TRULIA, INC.,  
Defendant.

Case No. [15-cv-00024-JD](#)

**ORDER DENYING  
DISQUALIFICATION MOTIONS AND  
RELATING CASES**

LAKSHMI ARUNACHALAM,  
Plaintiff,

v.

TRINET GROUP, INC.,  
Defendant.

Case No. 15-cv-00025-JD

The Court denies the pending disqualification motions in the two cases listed above and relates the cases as set forth below.

**I. DISQUALIFICATION MOTIONS**

Plaintiff Dr. Arunachalam has filed motions to disqualify the undersigned judge, in Case No. 15-00024 at Dkt. No. 20 and in Case No. 15-00025 at Dkt. No. 27. Both cases are patent infringement cases alleging infringement of the same patent, U.S. Patent No. 8,271,339 (the '339 patent), held by plaintiff, by defendants Trulia, Inc. and Trinet Group Inc., respectively. In substance, the two disqualification motions are very similar, and both are primarily based on the fact that "Judge Donato had worked at Cooley law firm for many years before he became a Judge in this Court" and "the lawyers for Defendant Trinet Group, Inc. are from Cooley law firm." Plaintiff contends that this serves as a basis for disqualifying the undersigned from the case against

1 Trulia as well, because “the Trulia case involves the same patent and the same subject matter as  
2 the Trinet case.”

3 Plaintiff seeks recusal under 28 U.S.C. § 455(a), and she identifies the correct standard,  
4 *i.e.*, “whether a reasonable person with knowledge of all the facts would conclude that the judge’s  
5 impartiality might reasonably be questioned.” *Preston v. U.S.*, 923 F.2d 731, 734 (9th Cir. 1991).  
6 The standard is an objective one. *Id.*

7 The Court finds that the standard is not met here. The undersigned judge’s association  
8 with Cooley LLP ended more than five years ago, in 2009, and plaintiff makes no assertion that  
9 any lawyer at Cooley served during the undersigned’s association with Cooley as a lawyer  
10 concerning these matters. These cases were just recently filed in January 2015, so it is not  
11 possible that the undersigned could have been at Cooley at the same time that any lawyer there  
12 was working on these cases. The undersigned has no financial ties to Cooley. Moreover, the  
13 undersigned recently presided over a jury trial in a case where plaintiff is represented by the  
14 Cooley law firm, and in which no party has raised any objection on the basis of the judge’s former  
15 association with Cooley. *See Open Text S.A. v. Box, Inc.*, Case No. 13-cv-04910-JD (N.D. Cal.).

16 This is not a “close case.” Plaintiff’s motions for disqualification are denied. Plaintiff is  
17 further ordered not to file any additional motions on disqualification without the Court’s prior  
18 approval.

## 19 II. RELATING CASES

20 The two cases listed above both concern the same patent, were filed by the same plaintiff  
21 and were filed on the same day. Pursuant to Patent Local Rule 2-1(a)(1), the cases are  
22 consequently deemed related to one another. The Court requests that the Clerk of the Court note  
23 as such on the dockets of these two cases, *i.e.*, Case Nos. 15-cv-00024-JD (*Arunachalam v. Trulia,*  
24 *Inc.*) and 15-cv-00025-JD (*Arunachalam v. Trinet Group Inc.*).

25 **IT IS SO ORDERED.**

26 Dated: March 6, 2015

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James Donato  
United States District Judge